



FEMA

Mitigation Plays Strategic Role in Local Land Use Planning

Polk County, MN - The City of East Grand Forks, Minnesota is a shining example of a community successful in both reducing the threat of flooding and planning for a prosperous future. After the 1997 flood impacted 90 percent of the city and its residents, city officials uniquely tied their emergency management efforts to their planning efforts. The results have been a stronger, disaster-resistant community.

Even though the flooding of 1997 was catastrophic, it did not weaken community spirit. The city chose to revive itself and turn the disaster into a positive experience with forward-thinking results. The many mitigation projects directly influenced the immediate and long-term future of this prosperous city and gave the city a unique opportunity to plan a new, thriving future.

Planning for a new city is exactly what East Grand Forks has accomplished. Since the Red River divides East Grand Forks, Minnesota and Grand Forks, North Dakota, the cities coordinate their efforts by working with the Grand Forks – East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization. The East Grand Forks 2035 Land Use Plan considers the projected needs of the city, including flood protection and economic growth.

East Grand Forks lays at the confluence of Red River and Red Lake River. Although the threat of flooding has been considered since the city's first Land Use Plan in 1978, it wasn't until the devastating 1997 flood and massive buyouts that the city realized just how much the floodplain would dictate their planning efforts. Nancy Ellis, Senior Planner for East Grand Forks, said, "The mitigation we did after 1997 was a driving force behind our 2035 Land Use Plan. Our new public, green space and increased housing needs warranted specific action by city officials."

Following the 1997 flood, the city implemented an Accelerated Acquisition Program using the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) administered by the Minnesota Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The HMGP project allowed the city to acquire 370 flood damaged properties. As part of the HMGP regulations, deed restrictions were placed on all the newly acquired public properties to prevent future development and flood losses.

Not only did residents need to repair and rebuild, but city government buildings and services also had to relocate. The City Hall, library, and three public schools were relocated and built new after the flood. Their location had to be planned and laid out in the city's new look. The city's downtown business district, adjacent to over a hundred buyouts, was protected from flooding with an innovative invisible floodwall. The area has recovered to become stronger with more opportunity for economic growth.



**Polk County,
Minnesota**



Quick Facts

Year:

1997

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$14,942,000.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)